



# THE DUGOUT

Branch Patron: *The Lord Lieutenant of Dorset - Angus Campbell*

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESSEX BRANCH OF THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

Your Local WW1 Historical Society

(Registered Charity : 1142787)

[www.wessexwfa.org.uk](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk)

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## MEETINGS 2015

At Pimperne Village Hall, Newfield Road, Pimperne nr Blandford Forum. DT11 8UZ- 2pm for 2.30pm start

August 8th - The Ardennes Campaign August 1914, Dr Simon House

19th Sept - From the good Soldier to the Emperor - Austro-Hungarian Army 1914, Alan Wakefield

10th Oct - French Foreign Legion in the Great War , Martin Willoughby

7th Nov - The Dorsets at Gallipoli , Chris Copson

6th Dec - Members Exhibition and Social

FIELD TRIPS:  
TBA

BATTLEFIELD TOURS:  
Sept 11th-14th - Aubers to Albert and Somme Points

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JUNE 2015

## Chairman's Chat

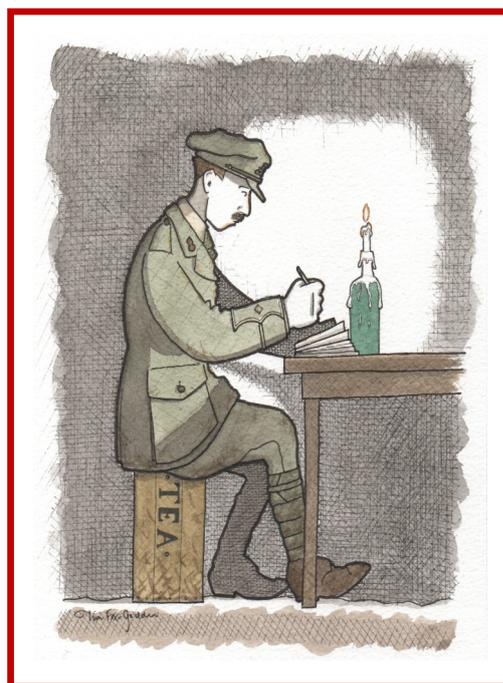
Since Issue 12 the branch has continued with its range of monthly meetings which have included Bill Fulton on 'Railway Guns', Dr Spencer Jones on the 'Indian Army' and Dr David Kenyon on the munition workers of the Royal Gunpowder Factory and Royal Small Arms Factory, a rarely covered topic. These talks were very well received and our thanks go to the speakers for taking the time to come and talk to us.

In addition to our busy schedule of monthly meetings there has been a field trip in March to the Imperial War Museum. This trip was for many the first opportunity to visit the new Great War Exhibition and the other re-vamped displays and was very well subscribed. Opinion was much divided on the efficacy of the 'New Look' IWM.

In May the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary attended the centenary commemoration of the Battle of Aubers Ridge 2015 at the Australian Memorial Park Fromelles. This service organised by Victoria Burbidge of the British Memorial Association – Fromelles marks the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915 battle - a British offensive, part of the British contribution to the Second Battle of Artois, a Franco-British offensive intended to exploit the German diversion of troops to the Eastern Front. The French Tenth Army was to attack the German Sixth Army north of Arras and capture Vimy Ridge, preparatory to an advance on Cambrai and Douai. The British First Army on the left (northern) flank of the Tenth Army was to attack on the same day and widen the gap in the German defences, expected to be made by the Tenth Army and to prevent German troops from being moved south of La Bassée canal. The Australian Memorial Park is on the site where 61<sup>st</sup> South Midland Division and 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Troops fought just over a year later in the Battle of Fromelles.

After the Aubers Ridge commemoration your Chairman and Secretary continued south to the Somme area to carry out a reconnaissance in preparation for the Branch September battlefield tour 'Aubers to Albert and Somme Points'.

In May branch members led by the Chairman and Secretary visited the Gallipoli peninsula touring the Helles, Anzac and Suvla sectors in this centenary year of the campaign. The weather was fine, our accommodation on Hill 141 was perfectly situated and we were very well looked after by Jan and Hatije who made us very welcome. Many were visiting for the first time and were surprised by the nature of the peninsula and soon came to understand the almost unique conditions that prevailed there.



....." Wessex  
Branch  
'probably' the  
best branch in  
the WFA!"

## Chairman's Chat continued....

Those who had been before noticed significant changes in the landscape due to erosion and ever denser flora. Able to visit remote as well as the better known locations without hindrance the tour was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Continuing the Gallipoli theme, those branch members who are 'Friends of the Collingwood Memorial' attended a service to remember the sacrifice of the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1915 by the Collingwood Battalion RND who sustained over 500 casualties at the 4<sup>th</sup> Battle of Krithia effectively destroying the battalion. The service is also an opportunity to remember those of other battalions of the RND who took part in the campaign and has been held annually for the last 96 years. Held in the presence of The Princess Royal, this years' service was especially moving.

With no meeting until the 8<sup>th</sup> August where Dr Simon House will talk on the Ardennes Campaign of 1914 the work of the branch continues with the final arrangements for the September battlefield tour being put in place and preliminary planning for other branch events such as Verdun in 2016 and Italy in 2017 along with general administration which never stops.

It goes without saying that 'The Dugout' is dependent on your input. It is noticeable that contributions to both 'The Dugout' and Members articles on the website come from a very limited number of authors. You will all be aware that without input Sandra our editor has nothing to publish! I am sure there are many of you who have that article, research item or book review that will be of interest to other members, so submit them to Sandra and myself for inclusion in the Dugout and the website. It is your resource – use it, build it, make sure others know about it!

Sadly I must report the untimely death of Tim Backhouse our web master. Tim has provided an effective support service to the branch and his input will be much missed. I have expressed our condolences to his wife and family. You will all appreciate that there will be an unavoidable interval while we find a new webmaster.

Please continue to visit our branch website as there is a wealth of interesting content which is still accessible including meeting details at [www.wessexwfa.org.uk/events/branch meetings](http://www.wessexwfa.org.uk/events/branch%20meetings). Meeting details are also displayed on the notice board at Pimperne Village Hall and also on the WFA national website [www.westernfrontassociation.com](http://www.westernfrontassociation.com)

The Trustees of the Branch who form the Branch Management Committee along with a few dedicated helpers ensure the branch is run effectively and provides an itinerary and schedule of events enabling members to continue to develop their knowledge and interest in the Great War. There is of course the social element to branch meetings which make our events enjoyable, interesting and zestful! I am sure that there is something for everyone to enjoy during the branch year. I thank you the members for your continued support and our Trustees and helpers for their Stirling efforts in making Wessex Branch 'probably' the best branch in the WFA!



**Martin Willoughby**  
Branch Chairman

## The First World War Centenary Lectures - Gresham College, London

- **Politics and the First World War- Professor Sir Richard Evans FBA**

Lecture held 17th March 2015 by Gresham College, London at The Museum of London, can be watched online at <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/politics-and-the-first-world-war>

The First World War put unprecedented strains on the economic, social and political systems of all the combatant nations. A year after the war ended, the Great European Empires had collapsed, and new, extremist ideologies, from fascism to communism, had emerged to disturb the postwar political world.

This lecture explores the reasons for the radical political changes that made the First World War the seminal catastrophe of twentieth-century Europe.

“War”, as the great Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously observed, ‘is the continuation of politics by other means’. It was in his view an instrument of policy, to be used to achieve specific aims and purposes. A perfect example of how this dictum worked out in practice could be found in Bismarck’s wars of the 1860s, all designed to achieve German unification under Prussian leadership. In each case, Bismarck provided a retrospective illustration of another famous dictum, this time from a French politician Georges Clemenceau, during the First World War, that ‘war is too important a matter to be left to the generals’. After the rapid victory of the Prussian armies over their Austrian opponents at the Battle of Königgrätz in 1866, the generals were keen to push on to Vienna, but in a series of heated arguments Bismarck stopped them, convincing the Prussian King, Wilhelm I, that the aim of expelling Austria from the German Confederation had been achieved, and that it was unnecessary to go any further, indeed dangerous, since the new Germany did not want to make an enemy out of the Austrians; having the French as an enemy was bad enough.

- **War, Health and Medicine: The medical lessons of World War I - Professor Mark Harrison**

Lecture held during May 2015 by Gresham College, London can be watched online at <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/war-health-and-medicine>

During 1914-18, medicine and health were critical issues in all countries and in all armed forces.

This lecture draws comparisons between different theatres of the war and seeks to explain the different degrees of success with which armies dealt with the medical problems of war. It shows the importance not only of technical and geographical factors but of the growing politicisation of medicine, domestically and internationally.

“The First World War was a turning point in military medical history. To begin with, it was the first major conflict – with the partial exception of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) – in which there were more deaths from wounds inflicted in battle than were due to disease. The figures for all the armies involved in the Great War aren’t reliable, but from British records alone we can see that the disease-battlefield casualty ratio was dramatically reduced. During the Crimean War (1854-6) there had been 5 deaths from disease to each one inflicted in battle; in the South African War (1899-1902) the ratio had narrowed to 2:1 but in 1914-18 it was slightly reversed – standing at 0.7 to 1. One reason for this was that the enhanced power of modern weapons had increased the number of fatal injuries. But the relative decline of disease-related deaths also reflected dramatic improvements in sanitation and hygiene, aided by some new technologies such as inoculations against typhoid and paratyphoid fevers. Indeed, this improvement in disease prevention was one of the most impressive medical achievements of the war. There were also significant improvements in casualty evacuation and treatment, which allowed a far higher proportion of soldiers to survive their wounds and in many cases to return to battle. This was partly due to better wound management but also reduced evacuation times in theatres such as the Western Front, in which there was extensive use of ambulance trains and motor ambulances.”



## My Aunt at Mons, 1914-1918



My aunt was Miss May Ethelreda Crick, born in 1886, so was approximately 28 years old on the outbreak of the First World War. I knew her as Auntie Ettie; the local newspaper in the interview set out below calls her Hettie. She was in Belgium for most of the war until she was repatriated to England on 1st November 1918. By coincidence, it was to her own home town of Boston that she returned, Boston having been selected as the English port in the Red Cross scheme arranged with the Germans for the exchange of civilians and badly wounded prisoners of war. The Germans used a port in the Netherlands.

My aunt was the eldest of six children; my mother was the youngest. Their father was a modestly prosperous builder. It was a Roman Catholic family. My mother told me many stories of her family's involvement in the war. She told of my aunt as being 'governess to a little girl in the Château d'Hyon' when war broke out. At that time Hyon was a village on the South Eastern outskirts of Mons. Mother talked of 'Gordon Highlander officers being at the château on the evening before the battle, British wounded there next morning (23rd August 1914), and German wounded in the afternoon'. This all coincides with official accounts of the battle; heavy fighting did take place in this area.

English  
lady  
trapped in  
Belgium.....

My aunt remained at Hyon, under German supervision, for over three more years. It should be remembered that another English lady trapped in Belgium at this time, Edith Cavell, was shot by the Germans for helping British soldiers trapped after The Retreat from Mons. There were also many stories of German atrocities against Belgian civilians. It was understandably a time of great strain for her family in England. While my aunt was in Belgium, her eldest brother, a sergeant in the 1/4th Lincolns, died of wounds in 1915 and was buried at Remi Siding Cemetery (now called Lijssenthoek) near Poperinge, only 50 miles away from Mons but on the other side of the trench lines. Another brother was gassed and taken prisoner in the German Spring Offensive on the Somme in France in 1918. Also, their father, my grandfather, died in a failed hernia operation in 1918. It is not surprising that the Great War left such a deep impression on my mother.



Initially, it was not clear where, exactly, my aunt's 'château' at Hyon was. In the interview she talks of leaving 'our little château' and going to 'the big one'. The interview makes reference to another lady, Miss Agnes O'Connell, also trapped in the Mons area, described as being at another château 'in the woods about an hour's walk away'. There were several châteaux in and around Hyon. Investigations by the Mons Tourist Office, then a tour of the area in 2002 in the company of an official from the Tourist Office, failed to establish the exact location of my aunt's wartime home. Further research on a visit in 2003 showed that her château was close to the village but has since been demolished. One of the surviving châteaux in that area is now the official residence of the Supreme Commander of all NATO forces; it is a very grand affair; could that be the 'big one' to which my aunt went on the day of the battle in August 1914?

We will never know.

My aunt never married. I remember her as a reserved, strict lady. I never took the opportunity to talk to her about her wartime years in Belgium before she died in 1963; this was before my interest in the war seriously commenced after my first visit to the Western Front in 1967.

The day after her return in the evacuation organised by the Red Cross in November 1918, a reporter from the *Boston Guardian*, a local newspaper, interviewed her. No one knew at that time that the war would be over in ten days' time. This is a transcript of the newspaper report. The reporter's questions are shown. Any editing by me is only of a minor nature.

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**When did you leave England?**

It was in April 1914, the year war broke out. I went straight to Mons. I lived there until March of this year, when I got a passport from the Germans and went to live in Brussels.

**Were you at Mons when the war broke out?**

Yes I was, and well I knew it, and I shall not forget it for a while.

**What were the conditions like?**

Well, they were pretty bad in the early part of the war. I was near to Miss Agnes O'Connell, whom you interviewed, and we were companions the whole time. She was living in a château in the woods about an hour's walk from Mons.

We were absolutely controlled by the Germans, and every now and then we had to go to the Kontrol, as it was called, to report. Twice I missed and on one occasion I had 50 marks to pay by way of a fine. They said, "The third time you do this, you will have to go to Germany". At the beginning of the war we only went once a month but, afterwards, it got to be once a week. We had to be there at 8 o'clock in the morning. If you were not there when your name was called out, you were fined.

**Speaking generally, how were you treated?**

Fairly well. You see, they could not do otherwise, as we were under the protection of the Americans.

**And when America entered the war?**

When the Americans joined the Allies and they all left Belgium, we were put under the protection of the Dutch Legation. As long as we complied with the regulations we were alright. In Brussels one did not feel it so much, but in Mons, you see, I was almost alone.

**How does Fritz in Belgium seem to be taking the news of the Allies' recent advances and victories?**

They are clearing out of Brussels as fast as they can go. Yet, on the other hand, the last day I was there they were making new hospitals for the wounded. It was also said that the Belgians were clearing out the King's Palace and were saying that the King would soon be back. I don't know how true that is though.

**And how have the prices of foodstuffs been affected?**

When they were talking of peace the prices went down a good deal but, when there was nothing decided, they went up again, higher than ever. Fats and lard you can hardly find, and beef dripping is as much as 60 francs a kilo. Coffee is 80 francs a kilo and tea as much as 210 francs. You think you are badly off here, but it is nothing. There were people who came over with us on the ship last night, people in a good position, and they said they could not live in Belgium. Meat is very dear too. Ham and bacon and anything like that are a tremendous price, and pork and mutton too. We could only get beef, and that only when it had been put through the mincing machine. For that you had to pay 10 or 12 francs a kilo. Other meat went up to 32 francs a kilo. Eggs were 1/4d each, 1 franc, 60 centimes. [Ed: The exchange rate seems to have been 13.3 Belgian francs to £1 sterling. Eggs at 1/4d. (one shilling and four pence) each is nearly 7 pence each in to-day's decimal currency.] Every Friday we had just one egg for lunch. Butter, too, you could scarcely get, and that at 50 francs a kilo. You see, you were liable to be searched any time in the street. The women resorted to some curious plans to get butter. I know of some who had long pockets under their skirts in which they placed articles they had obtained, and so when they were searched they apparently had nothing on them.

**The Germans had commandeered everything?**

Oh yes. They had taken the wool from the mattresses as well as the brass from the doors. They had even taken the bicycle tyres. We had to use old tyres even to mend our boots. They commandeered all the motor cars and people even buried them to prevent the Germans getting them. They took all the horses too. Our château was turned into a Red Cross hospital and we had one horse for the Croix Rouge, but they took that too.

**You could hear the firing for the Battle of Mons?**

Yes, we heard the firing of the cannon, first thing on the Sunday morning. A lot of our troops went past - the Artillery. We then left our little chateau and went to the big one. The Germans went to the house [the "little chateau"?], and I wish you could have seen the place when we went back. It

was terrible. Madame's linen was all on the floor and had been trodden on. They had taken the beds from upstairs and put them in the lounge and all over the place. It was terrible and they had drunk all the wine. They were all drunk.

**Miss Crick told me some stories of terrible treatment by the Germans, but she had no proof of the truth of the stories, as she was not there. One incident which she knows to be true is as follows:**

There were half a dozen British soldiers buried near to the château and I used to attend to the graves, keep them tidy and plant flowers on them. However, the Germans came and dug up the bodies to enable them to rifle the pockets.

They took the money and the watches, etc, and then buried them again. A day or two later, when I raked the soil over, I found a little packet of bandages, similar to what the soldiers carry, and a pocket-knife. They were quite near to the top of the soil. There were thirteen or fourteen buried there, in a big dyke near to; that was a beautiful grave. There were some lovely crocuses and the Union Jack. Later, the bodies were taken up again and reburied in the little cemetery at St Symphorien. [Ed: Now the enlarged, and very beautiful, Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) St Symphorien Military Cemetery, three kilometres away from where my aunt was at Hyon.]



Part of St. Symphorien Military Cemetery  
Photo by courtesy of Pierre Vandervelden

**You were not maltreated at all yourself?**

No, but you may guess that I am glad to get home again. It will seem strange to be able to walk about without being watched. We were never able to talk freely because there were so many spies about. It was very bad in the early days of the war and the Germans did a lot of damage. They were all drunk and it has been said that a lot of them had been let out of prison to join the army.

**Were you able to hear the cannon lately?**

Yes, you can hear them in Brussels.

**You were away from home when Miss O'Connell left for England?**

Yes, I was staying near Antwerp for about three weeks. When I got news that she had gone, I went back and prepared as well. I received my passport last Wednesday morning. A German brought it to me. They were much more lenient than when Miss O'Connell came over. They allowed us to bring 350 francs in money and 45 kilos of luggage. They did not weigh it. I think we got over easier; they did not strip us, or anything. They did not examine some people's luggage at all. We went to Rotterdam and were well treated. We sailed on Thursday morning. There were thirty-seven on our ship, the *Studora* - all women with the exception of three or four children. One lady, a Mrs Ellington, was allowed to stay in Boston, where she was met by her husband who returned later. He had been in Germany for four years.

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In recent years, a researcher at the National Archives found documents showing how my grandfather was in communication with the Foreign Office, attempting to get my aunt repatriated from Belgium at various times throughout the war.

The then neutral United States diplomats in Brussels were contacted by the Foreign Office and various letters were exchanged. But the Germans refused the request because Mons was classified by them as being in 'The Zone of Operations'. (I think that was the title; I do not have the copies of the correspondence now.) If she had been in a more distant part of Belgium she may have been allowed to return earlier.

After the United States entered the war in 1917, the exchange of letters ceased.



**Martin Middlebrook**

This article was kindly given to the Wessex Branch for our resources – it has also featured on [www.hellfirecorner.co.uk](http://www.hellfirecorner.co.uk)



## **Fifth of June 2015**

***“On this occasion (4<sup>th</sup> of June 1915) the Collingwood Battalion was practically destroyed” General Hamilton***



**The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the officers and men of the Collingwood Battalion Royal Naval Division who fell at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Krithia Gallipoli 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1915**

**Attended by:**

**HRH the Princess Royal**

**Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence**

**Wreaths were laid by and on behalf of:-**

**Australian and New Zealand Defence Staff**

**HMS Collingwood**

**Blandford Garrison**

**Residents of North Dorset & the People of Blandford Forum**

**The Portsmouth Battalion RMLI**

**Wessex Branch of the Western Front Association**

**Royal Naval Air Service**

**Royal Naval Division Engineers**

**Royal British Legion**

**Royal Naval Association**

**Gallipoli Association**

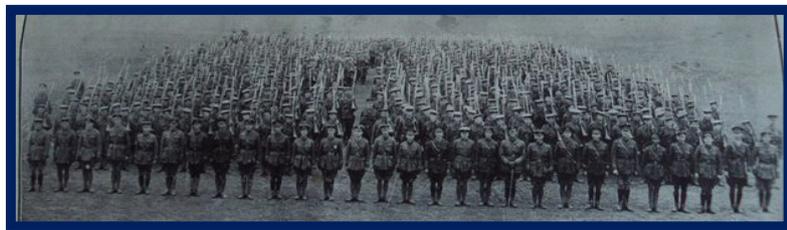
**“If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there’s some corner of a foreign field  
that is for ever England”.**

**Lt. Rupert Brooke  
Hood Battalion Royal Naval Division**

When Brooke wrote those words only a short distance from what is now Collingwood Corner he could have hardly imagined that 100 hundred years later the deaths of so many of his comrades would be remembered not in the corner of a foreign field but in the corner of a very English field a world away from the place of their deaths and in the lush green of an early English summer.

Primarily the concept of First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill at the outbreak of the Great War, Royal Navy reservists were formed into a Royal Naval Division consisting of two Naval Brigades and one Marine Brigade to perform as light infantry. Each of the eight battalions of the Naval Brigades was named after a famous Naval Hero or Commander e.g. Collingwood, Hood, Nelson Anson et al). The battalions of the Marine Brigade were named after the four Marine depots (Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham and Deal).

The Collingwood Battalion of the Royal Naval Division was no stranger to tragedy, poorly trained and equipped it had been thrown into the defence of Antwerp in a desperate attempt to halt the German advance in October 1914. The collapse of the defence of Antwerp and in the ensuing chaos and confusion of the retreat, only 22 men of the original 700 returned to England. The survivors would be formed into what would be known as the ‘New Collingwood Battalion’



**Collingwood Battalion Blandford Camp**

Due to the rebuilding of the battalion and the need for training at both Crystal Palace and Blandford the Collingwood Battalion would be the last to depart for the Gallipoli campaign leaving Blandford on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and Devonport on the 11<sup>th</sup>. By all accounts they were in good spirits when they arrived at Lemnos at 7am on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and itching to prove themselves in action.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> orders came through that the battalion was to sail for the front and disembark at Cape Helles. Once disembarked, the next few days were spent trench digging and then the battalion was told to ‘stand easy’ for a few days. On the afternoon of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June the battalion was informed that they would be required for an attack the very next day.

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### THE THIRD BATTLE OF KRITHIA

All previous attempts to force through the Turkish lines and to take the high ground had failed, however there was a feeling that the limited objectives of the third attempt would ensure success, tragically that was not to be the case. Despite some early success when the second wave arrived containing the Collingwood Battalion they were caught in enfilade fire and annihilated. In fact the figures speak for themselves: 16 officers killed, 8 wounded, 500 other ranks killed or wounded all in the space of 30 minutes. The two remaining officers rallied the remnant of the battalion but on retiring they were caught in heavy Turkish shelling adding another 20 casualties. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June the decision was taken to dissolve the battalion and to place the survivors in the other battalions. That decision was controversial and the survivors never forgot the loyalty they felt to their battalion and the men they fought alongside. In an account written shortly after the event this was said:-

*'The writer is not in a position to criticise the action of that day. But once can assure the readers that all fought gallantly under very trying circumstances. No one wavered although in many cases they were advancing to almost certain death. Let us then readers pay honour to the dead and those of us who lost beloved relatives take consolation in the fact that they died the noblest death of all doing their duty and fighting to preserve the honour of the country.'*

Today when we think of Gallipoli we think of incompetence, chaos and disaster and a pointless loss of life but one hundred years ago people felt and thought differently.



HRH THE Princess Royal inspecting the guard from HMS Collingwood

The Princess is also Colonel in Chief of a number of Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Regiments, and the first wreath laid at on the memorial after her own was that of the representatives of the Anzacs who also fought at Gallipoli.

Others wreaths were laid by representatives of the Blandford Garrison, local and central government, the trustees of the Collingwood Memorial, the Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and military associations.

Amongst the guests were descendants of those who fought and died in the battle and other actions during the campaign, including Martin Willoughby of Wareham, great-nephew of Frederick Willoughby, probably the youngest member of the Portsmouth Battalion to be killed in action at the age of 15 years, 10 months. Descendants of Frank Luard, commanding Portsmouth Battalion RMLI who was also killed in action were also among the guests.

Also present were was the great-nephew of Lt Commander Wallace Muir Annand, who led the Collingwood Battalion and died on the day and whose sword - permanently housed in the Blandford Museum - was on display in the Officer's Mess on the Camp, together with other war memorabilia.

His son Richard was the first recipient of the Victoria Cross awarded to a member of the British Army in World War II.

The service was conducted by the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Venerable Ian Wheatley. Captain Andrew Jordan, Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood, described the events of 5th June which saw more than 1000 officers and men die in the space of 45 minutes.

Stuart Adam, President of the Friends of Collingwood Memorial, whose family have maintained the tradition of commemoration at Collingwood for 96 years, thanked all those involved in the centenary event, and in particular Lt Col (Retd) Bob Brannigan and the Garrison Commander Col Matt Fensom of Blandford Camp for organising and supporting it. (Taken from the Blackmore Vale website)

Those of us who were fortunate enough to attend the ceremony that day would like to add our thanks and that of the Wessex Branch Western Front Association to all those who were responsible for the organisation of what was a particularly poignant ceremony. Everyone was impressed by the presence of Princess Anne and her husband Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence. Princess Anne found the time to chat informally too many including Wessex Branch WFA Chairman Martin Willoughby and Branch Secretary Judy Willoughby. Vice Admiral Laurence spent much time talking to many of the guests.



One can only hope that the sacrifice of the men of the Collingwood Battalion will never be forgotten and on the two hundredth centenary that their descendants will once again meet at the corner of an English field that now bears the battalions name.



**John Tozer**

## WESSEX BRANCH – WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

### RND CENTENARY TOUR

#### GALLIPOLI 18th MAY ~ 24th MAY 2015



Our Centenary Tour Party – Martin, Judy, Marc, Nigel, Michael, Roger, Chris and myself – travelled from Dorset on Sunday 17th May with the Homeward Bound Travel Company to the Novotel Hotel at Heathrow for an overnight stay. We left the hotel at 0430 hours in a shuttle bus the following morning for Terminal Five and passed through passport, luggage and security controls into the shopping mall area. At 0635 hours we boarded a BEA Airbus 340 and took off an hour later for Istanbul, landing at Ataturk airport at 1235 hours – Turkish time. Following entry checks we were greeted by old friends Terri and Ohannes (John) Karabeytan who acted as our local agents.

Warmly welcomed by John & Terri we were introduced to Ayhan our tour driver and we left the airport at 1330 hours for the 330-kilometre journey in an air conditioned 12-15 seater coach to Sedd-ul-Bahr. For Chris, Marc, Nigel and Roger it was their first trip to the Gallipoli peninsula. As we travelled through the outskirts of Istanbul they could not have been more surprised as were those who had been before of the new building construction and road improvements – which is ongoing – since our last visit three years ago. Ayhan a superb driver, stopped at a Baklava and Sweetmeat café where we enjoyed a very tasty snack and chai before continuing our journey.



As we drove along Martin gave a briefing for the benefit of all the tour party on the Gallipoli campaign and about various points of interest – including the RND ‘demonstration’ in the Gulf of Saros and the Lines of Bolayir. Heading down the peninsula road on the E-90, recently upgraded we passed under a new overhead bridge road complex. It is quite apparent that the Turkish authorities are upgrading the whole road system and not far from Eceabat, two road tunnels are being constructed through the hillside. A new Turkish cemetery has also been laid out a few kilometres from the town where a concentration of Turkish soldiers who died in 1915 are buried.

We arrived at the Pansiyon Panorama at Sedd-ul-Bahr at 1900 hours where Erol and his wife along with son Jan and Jan’s wife Hatice greeted us all as very welcome friends. Assigned to our rooms, and freshened up we all enjoyed a lovely evening meal in warm sunshine on the veranda – where we ate all our meals. Our meals were prepared and cooked by Hatice whose attention to detail and presentation is second to none. Suitably fed and watered we retired to our beds after a long, but pleasurable day.

We were all ‘up with the lark’ and after breakfast Martin gave a most interesting talk about the landings at Helles on the 25th April, 1915. Leaving the Pansiyon we drove to Morto Bay to visit the Turkish Memorial and virtual cemetery. From there our next stop was at the French Cemetery at Morto Bay. This large cemetery contains over 2,000 identified French soldiers. Within the lantern tower memorial is an ossuary containing the remains of approximately

On the memorial wall are sixteen inscribed tablets dedicated to French divisions, battalions, regiments, individual soldiers, ships including the Bouvet and the action at Zimmerman's Farm. Whilst in the cemetery Martin spoke about the deployment of French forces in the Dardanelles, at Kum Kale and the Helles sector.

Driving on towards Kilid Bahir we stopped at the statue of Corporal Seyit – the man with the shell – to show how narrow the Dardanelles is at the choke points for the benefit of the new tour members. A large merchant ship passing down towards the open sea gave a graphic illustration of the vulnerability of ships to shell fire from shore batteries. Passing through Eceabat once the Greek town of Midos, we intended to stop at the information centre on the outskirts, which is now closed and run down.

Lunch was taken at Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery where over 3,000 allied soldiers are buried or commemorated. Two thirds of them are unidentified and special memorials commemorate those who are known or believed to have been buried there. 180 New Zealand soldiers who have no known grave have their names inscribed on the Twelve Copse New Zealand Memorial. Moving onto Pink Farm Cemetery, where 602 casualties of the campaign are buried or commemorated. The name of the cemetery originates from the colouration of the soil in the area. Time allowed for exploration of the remains old trench systems around the cemetery. To undertake a recce for the following day's exploits we stopped by the roadside track which leads down to Gully Beach. Recent winter storms and erosion prevented us from getting to the beach. More time than was available was required to investigate a safe route to the beach and gain access to Gully Ravine. It was also noticeable that further erosion had taken place at X Beach, which is still accessible with care. At W Beach, Martin explained about the landing that had taken place there and afterwards we spent time in Lancashire Landing Cemetery. We then drove to V Beach where Martin gave a vivid description of the landing. After a contemplative walk around the cemetery a cool beer was then consumed at the Mocamp overlooking V beach, before visiting the refurbished Helles Memorial.

Wednesday morning dawned sunny and bright with the prospect of a very warm day. We left the Pansiyon at 0900 for a tour of ANZAC area. On the way we stopped at the Gaba Tepe Museum and then drove on up to the Lone Pine Memorial and cemetery. Martin brought to our attention the difference in the topography compared with the Helles area and that at Suvla. Well known features such as Johnston's Jolly, Courtney's and Steel's Post and Quinn's Post cemeteries were visited and details were given about the various actions fought in the area. Lunch was taken in the shade at The Nek Cemetery from where superb views of northern Anzac and Suvla can be seen. Nearby a memorial commemorates Sergeant Mehmet and twenty-five Turkish soldiers who fought the death on the day of the landing at Anzac. Opposite, just over the edge of the roadside can be seen the remains of a water tank hauled up the hillside from the beach by the Anzac troops. A short walk from The Nek took us to Walker's Ridge Cemetery and then a little further on, to view over a rickety fence Mule Gully, Plugge's Plateau and the Sphinx. An inevitable question was raised, how did soldiers endure the hardships and privations, let alone fight in such terrain?

We then drove on down to Shrapnel Valley Cemetery containing over 600 burials, 85 of them unidentified. Five of our tour party ascended the pathway from the cemetery to Plugge's Plateau. Our next visit was to the ANZAC commemorative area and then to Beach Cemetery. The most enjoyable day was completed by partaking cool refreshments beer at the Mocamp, before returning to the Pansiyon. Gathering on the veranda overlooking the Dardanelles after dinner we watched a spectacular thunder storm brew up and burst forth over the Asian side.

Thursday morning was cloudy at first but the sun broke through as we headed for Suvla. At Hill 60 Martin spoke about the actions fought there and time allowed for exploration of the area where good views of the W Hills, Chunuk Bair and Hill 971 could be seen. Outside of Lala Baba Cemetery Martin gave broad overall details of the landings at Suvla on the 6th-7th August 1915. He explained about tentative advances made amid much confusion which led to the failure to capture and consolidate the high ground. The cemetery contains 216 casualties,

53 of them unidentified. Special memorials commemorate 16 casualties known or believed to be buried there.

Nigel and Michael had photographs taken in Green Hill Cemetery by the Cross of Remembrance holding the Regimental flag of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry (RWxY) whose A Squadron is a direct descendant of the Queens Own Dorset Yeomanry. A similar photograph was taken on the summit of Scimitar Hill. The Dorset Yeomanry sustained heavy casualties advancing across the salt lake towards Green Hill, Chocolate Hill, and Scimitar Hill in mid-August. Chris meanwhile took the opportunity to look at the area known as Hetman Chair where 5th Dorset's were involved in heavy fighting.

From Scimitar Hill we drove to the Turkish Gendarmerie Memorial. Despite its remote location this memorial site has been refurbished, enlarged and enclosed by a wall for the 2015 centenary. Descending from there we stopped at Azmak Cemetery, the mostly northerly of the CWGC cemeteries on the peninsula. Here are buried 1,074 casualties, 684 of them unidentified. At Azmak our party assembled before the memorial cross where a wreath was laid on behalf of the Wessex Branch and a two minute silence observed.

A short stop was made at Hill 10 and then we continued on to Suvla Point where Martin brought to our notice the landing beaches and the importance of the Kiretch Tepe Ridge and other salient features in the area. For a break in our schedule we drove to the village of Buyuk Anafarta where we had "chai" and ice cream. A visit was made to the small museum and to what was once the village Turkish Baths. The building is now in a ruinous condition but nonetheless very interesting to explore.



We began on Friday, the final day of our tour of the peninsula at the Turkish 57th Infantry Regiment Memorial. The regiment fought the Australians here on the 25th April and Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa Kemal inspired his Turkish troops to defend their homeland and fight to the death. On the 19th May the Turks counter-attacked in large numbers and sustained 10,000 casualties. Whilst we explored the area Martin and Judy laid a wreath behind Quinn's Post Cemetery in remembrance of Martin's great-uncle Frederick Willoughby serving with C Company, Portsmouth Battalion, Royal Marine Light Infantry who was killed nearby aged 15 years on the 6th May.

He has no known grave and his name is inscribed on the Helles Memorial. Gathering in the cemetery we all took time to admire the commanding view down towards Anzac. From Quinn's Post we drove to the Nuri Yamut Memorial on Gully Spur, close to the old Turkish front line. Lieutenant-General Nuri Yamut commanded the Gelibolu II Corps and erected the memorial commemorating 10,000 Turkish soldiers, who died in and on Gully Ravine between the 26th June and 12th July, 1915.

We walked across the top of Fusilier Bluff and past Gurkha Bluff. A short halt at the top of Y Ravine was made to observe the spectacular views. Continuing on around field boundary's we entered the wooded area at the top of Gully Spur. However, the recent storms and continuing erosion meant that a descent of Gully Ravine was impractical needing more time than was available. The morning was very hot and discretion was wise in the circumstances but the short excursion into Gully Ravine it conveyed to everyone the conditions to be faced when exploring the ravine.

Lunch was taken at Redoubt Cemetery under the shade of the Duckworth oak tree before walking around the cemetery to view the graves. The cemetery named after a series of small forts (Redoubts) erected by the Turks and the Redoubt Line on which the May advance was halted contains 2,027 burials, 1,339 of them unidentified. Special memorials commemorate those who are known or believed to be buried in the cemetery. A brief stopover was made at Twelve Copse for Nigel to take a photograph of a grave on behalf of a colleague whose relative is buried there.

At Skew Bridge Cemetery Martin spoke about the deployment of RND and crosses were placed on the graves of Colonel F.W. Luard RM, Portsmouth Battalion, RND and Lieutenant-Colonel J.A.C. Quilter, Grenadier Guards, Commanding Officer of the Hood Battalion. The cemetery contains 607 casualties of which 351 are unidentified. Friday had been a hot, busy day and to relax a beer or two was consumed at the Mocamp where we reflected upon our successful tour of the peninsula.

After Saturday's morning breakfast we loaded our suitcases on to the coach ready for a 9 o'clock departure for Istanbul. We bid farewell to our wonderful hosts Errol, his wife, John and Hatice with a heartfelt expression of thanks. Ayhan made good progress, stopping once for a comfort stop before we reached the outskirts of Istanbul and encountered heavy Saturday afternoon traffic. Having previously arranged to pick up Terri and John on the waterfront in Istanbul we arrived at the Hotel Zeugma and checked in at 1515 hours. There was enough free time available to explore the area around the hotel and visit some of the historic sights. Evening dinner had been booked for us by Terri and John at the La Vita E Bella Restaurant, where everyone enjoyed the food. An expression of thanks was given to Terri and John for making arrangements for us in Turkey and to Martin and Judy for organising a splendid tour. Bidding farewell to Terri and John at the end of the evening a quiet stroll to the Blue Mosque was enjoyed by our party.

On Sunday morning there was time for another for a walk around the area before Ayhan drove us to the airport at 1100 hours. We all thanked him for his driving skills and enthusiasm. He often joined us in our visits to the cemeteries and places of interest where we stopped on the peninsula. Passing efficiently through Ataturk airport we boarded a BEA 340 Airbus for the flight to Heathrow, taking off at 1430 hours – Turkish time. We landed at Heathrow at 1550 hours – UK time – and were on our way to Dorset an hour later. Three of our tour party alighted at pre-arranged drop-off points and the remainder arrived at Wareham by 1930 hours and dispersed to their homes.

The centenary tour was an outstanding success and thoroughly enjoyed by all of our party. For the new comers any pre-conceived ideas brought with them were quickly revised as they absorbed the realities and environment of the Gallipoli peninsula.

One hundred years have now passed since the landing in April 1915 and nature has done its very best to cover over the scarred and torn battlegrounds. It is increasing difficult to explore some areas due to the dense undergrowth. The tree cover is beginning to obscure the outline of some ridges and erosion is gradually changing the landscape. However, there is still much to see and experience on the peninsula. It is of course most important to always remember the sacrifice of so many whether friend or foe, known or unknown who fought in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaign. Our Wessex Branch RND Centenary Tour bears witness to our continuing commitment that they will not be forgotten.



**Roger G. Coleman**

# 16078 Lance Corporal Arthur George Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment



Most Tuesday mornings at about 1130hrs the Drax Arms Bere Regis plays host to the retired and unemployable known locally as the 'Whingers and Moaners Club' when one of our founder members Mr Pip Evans knowing my interest in such things said, 'My mother always claimed that her mother went to Switzerland to visit her husband in World War One, we've never believed it' to be honest neither did I which just goes to show how wrong you can be.

Arthur George Hall was born to William & Anna Hall in the small village of Sweffling Suffolk in 1880.

Like many a young lad looking for the sort of excitement not readily available in the agricultural communities of East Anglia. Arthur joins the East Suffolk Volunteers which at the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War are incorporated into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. Private 6751 Arthur George Hall embarks at Dover, (note photograph Dover) on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1899 arriving at Capetown on the 28<sup>th</sup>.



On arriving the battalion was sent to assist General French in the Colesberg district on the railway between Blomfontein and Pretoria.

Their first major action a night attack on the 5/6<sup>th</sup> of January 1900 was doomed to failure. The battalion attacked a well entrenched Boer force on what is now known as Suffolk Hill. The Colonel and three other officers were killed along with 25 men, several wounded and a hundred men taken prisoner, not an auspicious start to their campaign.

In February 1900 the regiment was reformed as a mounted infantry regiment and joined Lord Robert's on his march to Pretoria and later was used to patrol the Blockhouse line. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion arrived home on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1902 having lost overall 8 officers and 147 other ranks.

Medal roll showing that Private A. Hall is entitled to the Boer War Medal with clasps for Cape Colony, Orange Free State & Transvaal.

On returning from the Boer War Arthur must have found the military life to his taste as his marriage lines show that on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January L/Cpl Hall marries Mary Field, (widow) whilst serving with the 'Military Police' stationed at the

REGIMENT OF CORPS

ROLL of Individuals entitled to the Boer War Medal and Clasp under the Army Order granting the Medal, issued on 1st April, 1903.

No. in Book	Rank	Name	Regiment	Service	Remarks
4810	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4811	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4812	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4813	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4814	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4815	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4816	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4817	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4818	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4819	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4820	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4821	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	
4822	Private	Hall, Arthur	Suffolk	1899-1902	

1. I certify that the individuals named in this Roll have actually served in the operations for which the Medal and Clasp are granted as above described.

2. I certify that the individuals named in this Roll have actually served in the operations for which the Medal and Clasp are granted as above described.

Victoria Barracks Belfast. Prior to the creation of the Corps of Military Police, (1926) followed by the Royal Corps of Military Police, (1946) the military police consisted of the Military Mounted Police (1871), Military Foot Police (1885) which of those two bodies Arthur belonged to is not clear, however there was a detachment of the MMP at Victoria Barracks and the fact the Suffolk regiment had been mounted during the Boer War would have probably qualified him for service with that body.

The 1911 census shows Arthur has returned to civilian life and is now living in Potton near Biggleswade Bedfordshire where he is working as a carter. The father of two daughters and a stepson he loses his wife Mary that year, remarrying Louise Harrison in 1912



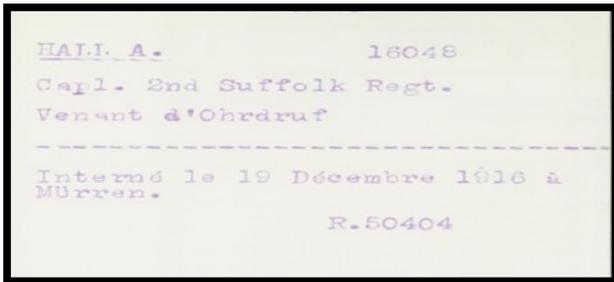
**Arthur wearing the uniform of the Nuneaton Brass Band about 1914.**

The outbreak of war and Arthur is living in Nuneaton Warwickshire he rejoins his old regiment the 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment, on the 12th of November 1914, but is not sent to France until the following July, this may be due to the pregnancy of his new wife who gives birth to another daughter that year.

The 2nd Battalion was mobilised from The Curragh, Ireland and sent to France arriving at Le Havre on the 17th of August. The Battalion was decimated at the Battle of Le Cateau. Of the 28 officers and 971 other ranks who arrived in France, only two officers and 111 other ranks would muster at St. Quentin, the rest were either killed, wounded or were amongst the 500 taken prisoner. So the Battalion that Arthur joined in July 1915 had been decimated and was in the process of being rebuilt.

The 2nd battalion was involved in many engagements on the Western Front throughout the summer and autumn of 1915. In particular 2nd Battle of Ypres, Hill 60. so it is difficult to know when and where Arthur was taken prisoner receiving a hand wound in the process.

Arthur was held at the Ohrdruf Camp Thuringia Central Germany. As that postcard shows not a popular posting and in World War Two would become infamous as Nazi Death Camp. So it must have been with some relief when Arthur found himself transferred to the Red Cross Internment Camp Murren Switzerland.



Red Cross Record showing the transfer of 16048 (sic) L/Cpl Hall from Ohrdruf to Murren 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1916

**The International Red Cross Internment Centre Chateau D'oex Murren Switzerland**





As you can see from the chapter headings of his book dealing with the internment of British soldiers Lt. Col. H.P. Picot CBE military attaché Berne and British officer in charge of Internment a very comprehensive account is given, this can be downloaded at:-

*In November 1914 the ICRC asked the Swiss President to look into the possibility of interning, in neutral Switzerland, a large number of men who were too severely wounded to be able to cope with the conditions of detention in the camps. For the first time, on 31 December 1914, the ICRC used its good offices to convince the belligerents of the need to reach agreement on this matter. However, it did not intervene directly, leaving the Swiss authorities to persuade the warring States to sign agreements among themselves. In 1916, as a result of these efforts, Switzerland took in up to 30,000 internees at one time. (Red Cross Website)*

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<https://archive.org/stream/britishinternedi00pico#page/n5/mode/2up>

The gratitude of the soldiers is expressed in this report which appeared in the Times

Later, in May 1916, a further 350 or so wounded and disabled men were transferred from German camps to neutral Switzerland. The British Minister present at the exchange, Mr Grant Duff, said " ..it is difficult to write calmly of it ... for the simple reason that I have never before in my life seen such a welcome accorded to anyone..." In the same way a reporter from *The Times* commented, "Our men were astounded at the welcome, many were crying like children, a few fainted with emotion. As one private said to the British Minister, "God bless you sir, it's like dropping right into 'even from 'ell..."

The sympathies of the locals are fairly obvious to gauge from the warmth of the reception.

The Scarlet Finders website gives an account of the opening of the Grey Hut a recreational facility for the men, and also explains how the families were accompanied from the UK to Switzerland.

<http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/163.html>

Even though the men were grateful to be out of Germany the Chateau was isolated and during the winter months was cut off from the outside world and boredom was an obvious problem. The family visits were much appreciated and must have been the high point of the incarceration.



This photograph shows a soldier, (not Arthur) and wife with the Chateau D'Oex in the background; the Chateau was at the core of several other camps and what were described as first class hotels for the officer. Those men considered fit enough were billeted in the towns and worked on the farms during the summer months.

<http://www.switzerland1914-1918.net/prisoners-of-war-interned-in-switzerland.html>

Sadly of the 2000 British and Dominion soldiers interned in Switzerland 61 died before repatriation. The area was particularly badly hit in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918; they are buried at CWGC Vevey

[http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/54344/VEVEY%20\(ST.%20MARTIN%27S\)%20CEMETERY](http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/54344/VEVEY%20(ST.%20MARTIN%27S)%20CEMETERY)

It would appear that Arthur's wounds were not severe enough to be considered for repatriation. Interestingly of those who were repatriated in 1917 one was Arthur Whitten Brown who would fly the Atlantic in 1919.

### Silver Badge Medal Roll

to/ The Secretary,  
War Office (A.G.10)  
27, Whitehall Street,  
E.C. 4.

Badge Roll No. 325

ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS ENTITLED TO THE WAR BADGE.

No.	Rank	Name (in full)	Unit discharged from	No of Badge Certificate (to be completed at War Office.)	Date of Enlistment.	Date of Discharge.	Cause of Discharge Wounds or Sickness Para. K.R.	Whether awarded overseas (you or wife)
8282	Pte.	Hallen Alfd.B.G.	Depot Suffolks.	B.177 284	7/7/11	21/3/19	Bronchitis 302(XVI)	YES 26
14527	Cpl.	Hallen Percy	do do	B.177 285	11/8/14	21/3/19	Wounds do	" 30
16078	Cpl.	Hallen Arthur Geo.	3rd Bn. do	B.177 286	12/11/14	26/4/19	do do	" 25
	Cpl.	Hallen William	Depot do	B.177 287	2/12/15	23/4/19	do 302(XVI)a	" 25
				B.177 288	2/8/14	24/5/19	do 302(XVI)	" 25
					26/11/14	12/3/19	D.A. do	" 25

Arthur would remain in Switzerland until the Armistice, returning home he would be transferred to the 3rd Battalion and then discharged due to his wounds. As you see he was awarded the Silver Badge given to ex-soldiers to wear to prevent them being accosted in the street, it was still being issued at the end of the war.

Arthur would return to Nuneaton continue to work as a carter, (horse drawn delivery vehicles being in use for many years after WW1) and be a mainstay of the Nuneaton Town Band until his death in 1943. Another daughter Muriel (Pip's mother) born in December 1919 would continue the military and musical tradition by marrying a Royal Marine bandsman who would see action on the Arctic Convoys.

So a comment from someone in a pub exposed my ignorance, giving me an opportunity to find out something about World War One which I certainly wasn't aware of: and it also proves you should always listen to your mother.



**John Tozer**

# H.M.S. FORMIDABLE FUNERAL CENTENARY ~ LYME REGIS CEMETERY

On the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1915 six men of the Royal Navy, who lost their lives in the torpedoing of H.M.S. Formidable were buried in one grave in Lyme Regis cemetery. Exactly one hundred years later to the day, a service of remembrance was held at the graveside. 35 officers and 512 men died on New Year's Day 1915 when the ship sank, the majority of whom have no known grave. The sacrifice of all those who perished were not forgotten during the service.

Twelve standards of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association flanked the grave. A short and poignant service was conducted by the Reverend Jane Skinner. Gathered around the graveside were officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, members of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association, the Mayor of Lyme Regis, members of the Wessex Branch WFA, family descendants, many of whom had travelled to Lyme Regis from various parts of the country and local townspeople.

After prayers, the Exhortation was recited, the Last Post sounded followed by two minutes silence and reveille. Wreaths were then laid on the grave by Commodore Jamie Miller R.N., Councillor Sally Holman the Mayor of Lyme Regis, the Chairman and Secretary of the Lyme Regis Branch of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association, the Secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the Royal British Legion, the Wessex Branch WFA and family descendants.

Among the latter was Alison Eley whose great uncle, William is buried in the grave. She had seen the article about H.M.S. Formidable on the Wessex Branch WFA web-site and contacted our secretary for any further information. Subsequently, the author of the article forwarded newspaper cuttings and other associated articles to Alison. Extremely pleased with the Wessex branches response to her enquiry she travelled down from London to lay a wreath on behalf of her Liverpool based family.

At the end of the ceremony the Reverend Skinner blessed all those present who then began to disburse. All who attended were

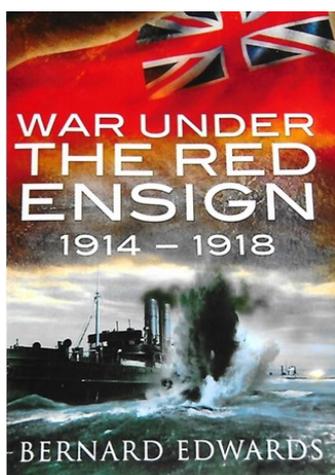
invited to a buffet and refreshments provided by the landlord of the Pilot Boat Inn. It was to this public house that some of the survivors and six of the dead who landed in a whaler at the Cobb Gate were taken.

Each year on the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday the Lyme Regis Branch of the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association hold a short wreath laying ceremony at the graveside ensuring that all the victims of H.M.S. Formidable are not forgotten. Any visitors who may wish to attend are very much welcomed.

For a fuller account the torpedoing of H.M.S. Formidable please refer to 'A New Year's Day Tragedy' on the Wessex Branch web-site.



**Roger G. Coleman**



## Book Review

# War Under The Red Ensign 1914 -1918

by Bernard Edwards

Published by Pen & Sword Books in 2010

Hardback – 208 Pages. £19.99p

ISBN 978 184 8842298

On the outbreak of the First World War Great Britain not only ruled the waves she also had an unrivalled merchant fleet. These merchant ships became a prime target for the German navy who reasoned that Britain's import and export trade in raw materials, finished goods and food products could be severed and therefore forcing the British government to seek peace terms with Germany. Their prime weapon for this campaign was the U-boat and surface raider.

The Royal Navy was dismissive at first of the submarine threat to merchant shipping, assuming that they had adequate warships to protect the merchant fleet. However, as Bernard Edwards makes clear in his book quite how the Royal Navy could protect hundreds of merchant ships sailing alone was neither practical nor common sense.

The war had barely begun when a surface raider stopped a British merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden and ordered her crew into lifeboats before sinking the vessel by gunfire. During these early stages of their campaign the Germans followed the rules laid down by the Geneva Convention. Although ships were sunk, where possible it was with the minimum loss of life.

Rules and convention was disregarded when the Lusitania was sunk on the 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1915 without warning by U-20. This emboldened other U-boat commanders over the following months and heralded a similar fate for hundreds of merchant ships, their crew and passengers. Gradually it became apparent that merchant ships required some protection and a process began of fitting them with a single gun often of pre-war vintage. The Admiralty held the view that the merchant service was a civilian service and in arming their vessels the enemy would class them as warships.

As civilians, the crews could not receive gallantry decorations. Two merchant ships captains Frederick Parslow and Arthur Bisset Smith displayed outstanding courage and self-sacrifice in defending their ships in engagements with a German U-boat and a surface raider respectively. It was not until 1919 that their gallantry was finally recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross. To overcome Admiralty sensitivities both were posthumously gazetted into the RNR. The dreadful story of the Brussels, a North Sea ferry whose captain Charles Fryatt was seized in the North Sea by the Germans and executed as a saboteur in 1916 for ramming U-33 in March 1915, is vividly told by the author.

Another moving story is that of the Franz Fischer – German name but a British merchant vessel – which was sunk during the hours of darkness with the loss of 13 men in the Thames estuary by a Zeppelin. The latter with mechanical problems was trying to return to its base and threw overboard its bombs, which the captain thought would fall harmlessly into the waters below.

Graphic descriptions about the voyages of merchant ships and their crews during the First World War are given in this book by Bernard Edwards. As shipping losses mounted Great Britain was within six weeks of facing severe food restrictions. The numbers of ships sunk exceeded the capability of ship yards to replace them. It was not until 1917 that a convoy system was introduced which reduced the numbers of merchant ships sunk by the enemy.

This readable and absorbing book is full of facts and details about friend and foe in a bitter and cruel war at sea. It is a fitting tribute to the fortitude and courage of merchant seaman during the First World War and to those who lost their lives. They are remembered with grateful pride on the Tower Hill Memorial.

**Roger G. Coleman**



# Great War Quiz

1. British casualties in France and Flanders in 1915 comprised 67,415 killed, 206,113 wounded and how many missing / prisoners of war?
2. What happened off Kinsale on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915?
3. Who was the first aviator VC?
4. Where did the British IX Corps land on 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> August 1915?
5. Which battalion had 214 officers and men killed at Quintinshill on 22/05/1915?
6. Which country declared war on Austria–Hungary on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915, but did not declare war on Germany until 28<sup>th</sup> August 1916?
7. Name the Dutch designer who developed the machine gun interrupter–gear fitted to German aircraft from 1915?
8. What was unusual about the sinking of the German submarine U36 off the Hebrides in July 1915?
9. After which battle in November 1915 was General Townsend’s force obliged to retreat to Kut?
10. There were twelve “Battles of the Isonzo”. How many took place in 1915 – 2, 4 or 6?
11. Pipe Major Robert Mackenzie (6 KOSB) died in October 1915 of wounds received piping forward the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt in the Battle of Loos. How old was he?
12. How many Victoria Crosses were awarded for actions at the Battle of Aubers Ridge?



13. “We beat them on the Marne  
And we beat them on the Aisne.  
We gave them hell  
At \_\_\_\_\_  
And here we are again.” *[Soldiers’ Song]*



Where did the BEF give the German Army “hell”?

14. What “first” did London experience on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1915?
15. Which poet died on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1915, three days after his poem ‘Into Battle’ was published?

(Answers on back cover)

## BRITISH ARMY CAP BADGES

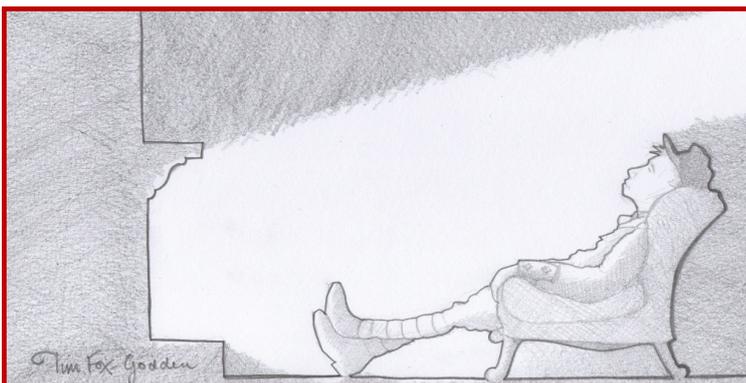
### The Cheshire Regiment

The badge was a brass acorn and oak leaves over an eight pointed white metal star above a scroll inscribed ‘Cheshire’. An all brass war economy version of the badge was produced.

Some 39 battalions of the regiment served during the war and two soldiers were awarded the Victoria Cross.

A total of 75 battle honours were granted to the regiment including Mons, Ypres 1914 ’15 ’18, Somme 1916 ’18, Arras 1917 ’18, Messines 1917 ’18, Bapaume 1918, Doiran 1917 ’18, Suvla, Gaza, Kut al Amara 1917.

Estimates casualties (died): 8,420.



## “A Cushy Billet”

# Important Information

Meetings are held at:

**Pimperne Village  
Hall,  
Newfield Road,  
Pimperne  
Blandford Forum  
Dorset  
DT11 8UZ**



## Branch Executive Committee and Trustees

**Martin Willoughby**  
Chairman /Trustee

**Rod Arnold**  
Vice-Chairman /Trustee

**Judy Willoughby**  
Secretary /Trustee

**Marc Thompson**  
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**Katherine Seymour**  
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**Sandra Twyford**  
Newsletter Editor/Trustee

**Angela Tozer**  
Trustee



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org.uk**

## And finally.... (Quiz Answers)

[1] 23,055; [2] Lusitania sunk by U20 - 1128 lives lost; [3] Lt. William Rhodes-Moorhouse; [4] Suvla Bay, Gallipoli; [5] 1st/7th Royal Scots; [6] Italy; [7] Anthony Fokker; [8] First submarine sunk by a Q-ship; [9] Ctesiphon; [10] Four; [11] 59; [12] Four; [13] Neve Chapelle; [14] First Zeppelin raid; [15] Capt. J.H.F. Grenfell (1890-1915).

